

S U M M A R Y

THE SUSTAINABLE VISION FOR WASHINGTON'S SOLID WASTE SYSTEM

ROUND TABLE MEETING 1

March 5, 2001

GENERAL MEETING SUMMARY

The Work Has Just Begun

The "Sustainable Vision for Washington State's Solid Waste System" round table meeting series brings community, business, and government together to identify coordinated approaches to solid waste issues. In spring 2001 meetings are being held in each of four regions throughout the state – a total of sixteen meetings – to develop regional recommendations for revising the State Solid Waste Plan.

Background

Ecology is coordinating the effort to revise the State Solid Waste Plan, which was last updated in 1991. RCW 70.95.260 directs Ecology to coordinate the development of a plan for all areas of the state that "looks to the future for twenty years as a guide in carrying out a state coordinated solid waste management program." The draft vision for the revised plan incorporates the top priority for handling waste, which is waste reduction, as stated in the Solid Waste Management – Recovery & Recycling Law – 70.95 RCW.

In early March 2001 "Meeting 1" of the four-meeting series was held in four regions across the state – eastern, central, southwest, and northwest. Participants discussed solid waste issues of importance in the region, reviewed a draft vision, and received a copy of "Issues Identification: Issues for Consideration and Discussion," Ecology publication # 01-07-001. This document summarizes the work to date on issues identification by Ecology staff, Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) members and other

E A S T E R N R E G I O N

WHERE WE WANT TO GO - REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Review of Draft Vision for Solid Waste Planning

Participants reviewed a draft long-range vision that reaches beyond the 20 year planning horizon. They raised issues of importance in their region regarding the impact, challenges and opportunities such a vision would pose solid waste in their region.

A sustainable economic system exists, based on resource and energy conservation, pollution prevention, waste reduction and material reuse. The historically separate efforts to protect the environment and to promote economic development have merged.

Businesses balance material and energy use with practices that reinvest in environmental capital, recognizing that such stewardship is the basis for their survival and profit.

Individuals recognize their role in achieving and maintaining sustainability as inhabitants and consumers. Consumers demand, are provided with, and choose goods and services with the lowest life-cycle impacts on energy and materials use.

Government economic development policies provide incentives to businesses and industry to achieve and maintain sustainability.

Communities create and sustain local systems that support growth within the limits of the environmental carrying capacity.

stakeholders for consideration in the state plan revision and is available on the project web site at: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/swfa/swplan>. The issue papers fall into three general headings: where we want to go, what we need to do today, and how we will move toward a more sustainable future. Throughout the round table meeting series participants will explore each of the issue paper topics as they relate to these headings.

Participants at the Meeting 1 sessions identified solid waste issues unique to their regions that relate to the draft sustainable vision. These issues, along with others raised in the earlier issue papers, were examined for their importance in the state solid waste plan revision. This summary of regional issues identified in Meeting 1 will serve as the foundation for the continued development of regional recommendations. Regional discussion points can be found in the *Where We Want To Go - Regional Perspectives* section of this summary.

Joining In

The regional round table series is designed for regions to work together to address jointly identified solid waste issues. Participants will recommend an overall, mutually beneficial approach to the state solid waste plan that takes into consideration regionally specific needs.

Participants of Meeting 1 formed the initial foundation for the regionally specific dialogue regarding solid waste issues. All "stakeholders" (all interested residents) throughout the state are encouraged to join their regional dialogues during the three remaining meetings.

OVERVIEW OF FOUR MEETING SERIES

The goal of the round table meetings is to provide a forum for participants to work directly together with other stakeholders and have maximum possible input to the state solid waste plan revision at a regional level. This proactive involvement engages participants in dialogue with others of like mind who share similar interests on solid waste issues in "sectors." The following are the self-defining sectors that participants at Meeting 1 worked in:

- Business
- Environmental
- Government
- Solid Waste Industry
- Community and Civic Groups

PARTICIPANT COMMENTS

- "Protect the Environment and Economic Development has merged" -

A participant raised concern that the economics in the Eastern half of the state shows that they cannot do this as the markets do not support it. An example was given regarding recycling. When recycling started cardboard was the largest section of the waste stream, now no market exists for this waste stream.

- Economics of Reuse-

It was noted that if the state were to direct solid waste to be handled this way and local government was left to do it, an agreement would be needed, ready and in place, to assure that counties and others will engage in shipping waste to places where it would be economically feasible to be reutilized.

Money to support the costs of transportation on the Eastside of the state was noted as a necessary element for participation in this vision.

The distance to haul recyclable waste from collection exceeds the ability of haulers to move it into a market for reuse. New sources for reuse need to be figured out, Vista will not burn paper, only wood chips and the metal recyclers cannot afford to come to sites in the Eastern Region

In many counties, the local jurisdiction has a problem controlling where the garbage goes; much of it gets exported, which impacts money available to support activities.

- Sustainability -

Sustainability is already happening in other parts of the world. Australia plans to be at zero waste in 2020, and Nova Scotia has knowledge to share. It was noted that there is a need to move from a linear trash system to a closed loop system that takes resources we have and puts them to use.

Sustainability means the ability to address a problem in a defined approach with the infrastructure necessary available to do it. Too much instability exists in external forces such as marketing and regulations, and these erode the sustainability issue and affect the ability of people to dispose of things or recycle them. The Eastern Region needs to maximize the resources we have. In Spokane, combustion is used to make energy out of garbage; this promotes sustainability in the larger sense of the word.

The federal government tax and process that holds businesses responsible to deal with wastes that can't be recycled or are not being recycled needs to be addressed.

Participants decide, based on their interests in solid waste issues, which of these groups they wish to work with. The perspectives unique to each of these sectors will be reflected in the regional recommendations to the state solid waste plan revision. Issues in common within regions and across the state will be considered in the overall statewide recommendations.

The April, May, and June meetings in each region will provide on-going discussion regarding a sustainable vision for solid waste.

In April, participants will identify milestones for the issues identified by participants in Meeting 1. The two goals of the April meetings are to identify indicators for sustainability for a long-term vision, beyond 60 years, and also to determine sustainability-related milestones that meet the current solid waste systems' needs.

In May, participants will identify strategies and alternatives they wish to see considered for the region to achieve the milestones identified in April.

In June, participants will bring together the vision, milestones, and strategies into a regional recommendation to support movement toward a sustainable approach to solid waste.

OUTCOMES FOR PLAN DEVELOPMENT

State Solid Waste Plan

The State Solid Waste Plan is a blueprint or guide that provides a long-range vision for solid waste activities around the state. The state solid waste plan has been updated three times since 1972, and is currently a decade old. New waste streams have emerged and conditions, economically, socially, and environmentally have changed in the state. Ecology recognized that the plan no longer serves as a current guide to coordinating solid waste programs and that a revision to lead us into the future is needed.

What the Revision Will Do

The foundation of this state solid waste plan revision is to create a more sustainable future, which includes the recognition that the solid waste being managed and disposed of represents a significant drain on the state resources needed to support our society and quality of life.

The revised plan will serve as a blueprint for local communities and state and federal agencies that implement solid waste and natural resource programs. It will provide direction on

There is not a way to talk about sustainability without talking about zero waste.

- Beneficial Use -

Beneficial use, what it means, as well as the priorities, need to be addressed. The waste energy plant in the Eastern Region will require the process to consider the social value of waste cardboard. It has both values in BTUs as well as a recycled paper content.

- External Forces -

State regulations created outside of a region, which do not take into consideration of the unique problems of each region, cannot continue. This type of planning negatively affects the local jurisdictions abilities to build strategies that work for them.

- Prevention of waste and sustainability-

There are some large special interests in the Eastern Region and throughout Washington State that encourage packaging products in paper and they have power and impact on decision-making. Something is needed to address those people and get them involved to stop packaging in cardboards, waste paper, liners, and other paper products. These wastes present challenges in this region to deal with waste reduction and sustainability, for example the burning of paper introduces environmental concerns.

The per capita waste generation rate is up and rising. One possible approach is to address the large generators of waste. The two largest waste paper producers are law offices and government. The focus needs to move from looking only at the recycling process, which has a glut, and look at how to move toward zero waste.

- Product stewardship -

The concept of product stewardship is challenging to convey to the rural communities. The recycling effort is even hard for some to participate in. The draft vision's first bullet may not be clear for small rural Washington businesses to conceptualize a way to implement. There is also likely to be a concern regarding government regulations.

A product stewardship example from rural Washington was offered. Clean Air Agriculture makes compressed straw bales to deal with wheat chaff that cannot be burned. The chaff is picked up for free from farmers and processed. The resulting straw bale product can be used for construction, and it has both a global and economic impact.

the regulatory and voluntary roles, as well as outline partnerships with others in the community that can help reduce waste and its impacts. The revision includes looking at a larger portion of the solid waste universe than has been planned for in the past. The plan will result in impacts to and involvement of many different stakeholders than traditionally have been involved. The plan revision should provide the framework and goals for everyone's role in managing waste more sustainably.

It is possible that the recommendations for the revision could be regional in nature and not be "one-size-fits-all." Regional needs can be taken into account in this way.

An orientation to the state plan revision history was provided at Meeting 1 and is summarized briefly in the following section:

History of the Process to Date

Ecology began working with the State SWAC and a number of local government officials in early 2000 on the approach for updating the plan. The initial idea was to update the plan in phases. Information revealed in this early phase of work indicated that a quick update would not be as useful to local governments as a full revision to the state solid waste plan. Throughout the focus groups, interviews, and discussions in 2000 two common themes arose regarding the direction for the future of solid waste: waste prevention and sustainability.

Work groups were formed to explore issues and provide background necessary to determine what elements will be included in the revision to the state solid waste plan. The groups had broad representation with over sixty people from outside Ecology. Over fifty meetings to date were conducted to develop the issue papers, which provide the foundation for the round table discussions. The full text of the issue papers can be found in the "Issues Identification" document*. The issues covered were not meant to be exhaustive of all the issues related to solid waste; they include the following topics:

- Sources and Quantities of Solid Waste
- Roles, Responsibilities, and Authorities
- Litter and Illegal Dumping
- Collection
- Waste Disposal Reduction and Avoidance
- Waste Reduction

REGIONAL ISSUE IDENTIFICATION BY SECTOR

Participants explored issues of regional importance for a vision of solid waste that incorporates the theme of sustainability. Breakout groups provided the opportunity to explore the issues from the perspectives of government, solid waste industry, business, environment, and community and civic groups. Five main topics, from the issue papers were provided as discussion points: Universe of Solid Waste, Waste Prevention, Waste Diversion, True Cost of Solid Waste, Sustainability, see the general meeting summary's *Issue Identification by Sector and Region* section for additional detail on these headings. Participants also had the opportunity to raise additional issues in the small groups. All of these were reviewed for the level of importance they may play in the state plan revision process.

While participants were given the opportunity to rank two high, medium, and low issues for inclusion in the state plan revision; these were not intended as a voting mechanism for the process. These 'rankings' provided the participants a dialogue starting point. In the full group discussion that followed the breakouts, participants further explained the additional issues raised and those of high importance to the sectors of perspective. The following summarizes the issues and their importance by sector.

Solid Waste Industry Breakout Group

Participants in the solid waste industry discussion group conveyed that waste prevention and the true costs of waste were highly important to include in a revision to the state solid waste plan. Waste diversion was also seen as an important element to consider. Participants raised additional issues for consideration. These include the responsibility of government agencies to participate in recycling efforts themselves and burn bans and private landfills on residential properties. The burn bans and private landfills are of concern in this region as there are no enforcement or monitoring actions in place to deter them, though regulations do exist. The issue of sustainability was considered a low priority, as it was vague in its description and function in the plan. Participants in this group considered the universe of solid waste a lower priority as well.

Community & Civic Breakout Group

The highest consideration in the community and civic groups was an additional issue raised by the participants: the need to identify and alter tax policies that affect sustainability. A shift in taxes to resource depletion and polluting activities was considered the most important focus for the revision

- Product Stewardship
- Landfills, Past, Present and Future
- True Costs of Solid Waste (includes Economics of Recycling)
- Recycling

* Ecology publication Issues Identification: Issues for Consideration and Discussion, # 01-07-001 contains each of the issue papers and is available on the project web site, <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/swfa/swplan>

Outcome of the Round Table Meetings

The plan recommendations are not written at this time; there is no drafted language to review and comment on. The recommendations drafted at the regional round tables will provide a foundation for the next phase of feasibility study and revision language development, which will follow the round tables in summer of 2001.

March – June 2001 is the time to identify what is needed to create a state solid waste plan that will have support from the diverse stakeholders who will be asked to participate in implementation activities. The door is wide open; there is flexibility to determine what is needed for the future. The draft language for the state solid waste plan will come out in Spring of 2002, and will be finalized in Summer 2002.

DIVERSITY OF PERSPECTIVES ON SOLID WASTE

The March round table meetings centered on where we want to go – what we want our future solid waste system to look like. Thoughts and ideas raised in several of the issue papers (contained in the "Issues Identification" document) relate to this future system and what it should accomplish.

Universe of Solid Waste

Issue Paper #1 Sources and Quantities of Solid Waste from the "Issues Identification" document examines the types and sources of solid waste in Washington State. A diagram depicting this universe of solid waste was presented to participants for consideration in the scope of the plan revision. The current and increasing levels of waste generation, new waste streams, and increasing impact on our resources, financial, social, and environmental give rise to need for consideration of all categories of non-hazardous, non-radioactive solid wastes in this plan

recommendations. Also rated highly were waste prevention and sustainability. The next most important considerations were the universe of solid waste and true costs. Numerous issues and strategies were named by participants for consideration in the regional recommendations. These participants noted that none of these would be considered a low priority, though the exercise did limit the number of high ratings possible.

Additional Issues raised by the Community & Civic Group participants include:

- 1) Identify and alter tax policies and shift taxes to resource depletion and polluting activities.
 - a) End federal and state subsidies for virgin materials extraction, processing and manufacturing.
 - b) Eliminate mining exemptions from hazardous waste rules.
 - c) Make landfill and incineration prices reflect their true costs - including health and environmental impacts.
 - d) End subsidies for incineration (60 mil from Ecology to Spokane incinerator, 1990).
 - e) Implement policies that require cost of disposal into prices of products.
 - f) In addition to full cost accounting for true cost of waste promote full value accounting to account for the value created by recycling, lowered waste, etc.
- 2) Level the economic playing field for resource conservation.
- 3) Make manufacturers share responsibility for their product and packaging waste.
- 4) Develop holistic resource management systems - federal, state, & local government actions
 - a) Broaden focus of waste reduction efforts beyond municipal solid waste to encompass other types of wasted materials, which need to be part of the waste reduction agenda. About 11 billion tons of materials are wasted each year. The environmental and economic implications of these wasted materials, particularly mining and industrial oils are critically important.
 - b) Adopt zero waste management plans with waste elimination goals as well as recycling goals. Become models for the private sector to emulate.
 - c) Require brand owners to include labels on products that show recycled content and key environmental impacts. This will help educate the public and allow them to make better-informed choices.
 - d) Educate, educate, educate. Undertake public educational campaigns to link preventing, reusing, and recycling municipal discards with its upstream and downstream

revision. This includes the following categories:

- Municipal waste
- Industrial waste
- Resource use and extraction waste
- Transfer waste
- Inert waste
- Moderate risk waste

Sustainability

Participants were challenged to look beyond existing systems and consider longer-term visions of sustainability in their region. Sustainability was explained as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

A question arose in all regions regarding this theme of sustainability. Where did it come from? The foundation work done over the past year found sustainability was a consistent theme, in focus groups, work groups, local solid waste plans’ visions and goal statements, as well as the state law that names waste reduction as the first priority. Increasingly, the federal direction for solid waste, which also informs the state’s future, is moving toward more sustainable approaches to solid waste. All these factors led to establishing sustainability as the focus for the state plan.

Where previous plan revisions and subsequent funding centered on recycling and the Municipal Waste Stream; there have not been great strides in waste reduction systems. While a strong recycling infrastructure does exist in the state, it is experiencing limiting factors. We will need to invest in the future while maintaining the current solid waste system to make the transitions necessary to get to where we want to go.

WHERE WE WANT TO GO

Review of Draft Vision for Solid Waste Planning

Participants reviewed a draft long-range vision that reaches beyond the 20 year planning horizon. They raised issues of importance in their region regarding the impact, challenges and opportunities such a vision would pose solid waste in their region. A summary of the regional responses are located in the *Regional Review of the Draft Vision* section of this document.

benefits and its place within a sustainable economy.

- e) Federal Action
 - i Track the economic and environmental impacts of resource consumption & wasting. Document the impact on industrial waste of recycling municipal discards.
 - ii Develop national database (like toxics release inventory) to report materials and energy consumed and wasted. Require industry to report wasted materials.
 - iii Develop a national labeling system, similar to the nutritional labeling system on food.

5) Build the Reuse & Recycling Infrastructures - federal, state, and local government actions

- a) Expand recycling market development efforts with an eye toward closing the loop locally (i.e. within the local economy), producing high value end products and linking recycling-based economic development with a larger vision of sustainable community development. Avoid a narrow focus on ‘waste management’ that limits potential partners who can help foster recycling as a cornerstone of a sustainable materials economy.
- b) Require deposits on a wide-range of products. Ten states have beverage container deposit laws and several require deposits on tires, batteries, and appliances.
- c) Establish landfill and incinerator surcharges to finance investment in waste prevention, reuse, and recycling. A national disposal surcharge may be in order.
- d) Implement or expand existing buy recycled programs.
- e) Launch a public information campaign that will allow consumers to make smart choices when making purchases.
- f) Funding for research to identify new technologies to turn used materials into products
- g) National beverage container law
- h) Recycling investment tax credit
- i) Ban products and packaging that cannot be re-used, repaired, recycled or composted.

Government Breakout Group

Participants in the government perspective dialogue considered sustainability to have a high level of importance in the state plan. Waste prevention and true cost of waste were identified by many to be of higher interest in the state plan revision, than universe of solid waste or waste diversion. The discussion also raised additional issues for consideration in the revision recommendations. These include economic disincentive issues, which need to be addressed, along with regulation limits that will make sustainability and waste work. Examples of these issues include the current system dependency on the tipping fees and opening CDL waste up for competition.

It was noted that residents of Spokane County are ‘paying for the sins of the past’ and have higher tip fees to pay for

ISSUE IDENTIFICATION BY SECTOR AND REGION

Participants explored issues of regional importance for a vision of solid waste that incorporates the theme of sustainability. Breakout groups provided the opportunity to explore the issues from the perspectives of government, solid waste industry, business, environment, and community and civic groups. Participants had the opportunity to raise additional issues to the five main topics, drawn from issue papers that were provided as discussion points. These included:

Universe of Solid Waste: Focus on addressing the sources and generation points of various waste materials throughout the extraction, processing, manufacturing, sale, use and disposal.

Waste reduction: Concentrate on dealing with materials that are currently considered waste and look for ways to turn them into products. Preventing and/or reducing the volume and/or toxicity of waste.

Waste disposal diversion: Emphasize the diversion of waste materials that are generated out of end disposal by diverting them to other uses (such as land application).

True costs: Focus on accounting for all of the costs of solid waste decisions pertaining to current system or new ways of doing things, such as social, resource, health, pollution, and economic.

Sustainability: Focus on the creation of a future system that promotes sustainability, which generally is defined as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

While participants were given the opportunity to rank two high, medium, and low issues for inclusion in the state plan revision; these were not intended as a voting mechanism for the process. These 'rankings' provided the participants a dialogue starting point. In the full group discussion that followed the breakouts, participants further explained the additional issues raised and those of high importance to the sectors of perspective. A summary of the region's the issues and their importance by sector are located in the *Regional Issues Identification by Sector* section of this document.

landfill closures. This makes residents think about waste disposal. Consumer habits, desires, and society values, along with recycled product availability, all have an impact on the achievement of sustainability.

Other regional concerns to take into consideration include the history of waste diversion efforts that have been deterred due to cheap prices for disposal. This put some recyclers out of business. In addition, the merger of collection businesses in the commercial and residential waste arena has created monopolies that provide fewer choices for consumers and healthy competition in the industry. Participants in this dialogue expressed the desire to continue to explore issues of importance in future meetings.

CLOSING DRAFT VISION REVIEW BY PARTICIPANTS

Participants were asked to review again the draft vision, following the review of issue identification across sectors. The group was asked to consider how the perspectives across sector reflect the issues of importance in the region. The following summarizes questions, specific, and general comments regarding the draft vision and its relevance to the Eastern Region.

- Draft Vision -
- The first statement sounds too vague to be applicable in a specific sense. The way it is worded; different people could interpret it differently.
- The government section is limited. Considering the many different programs and subsidies this does not provide a full picture.
- The vision should start with where we are together, it should look at issues that are in common instead of dividing and starting as different points of view.
- The vision needs to describe how we are looking at the downstream effects of what we are doing. This vision would affect others, for example health and related costs.
- Our lowest economic groups need to be included in developing regional perspectives as they have unique needs that should be included. The downstream discussion regarding the implementation phase needs to address social equity and the practicality and logistics of how the vision moves to implementation for these economic groups.
- Industry needs to be involved and considered as they have the biggest stake in the financial impacts of the decision.

THE NEXT STEP

Participants at Meeting 1 were encouraged to note who needs to be present at these round tables to capture the diversity of perspectives in the region. Those present appreciated that many new stakeholders play a fundamental role in developing regionally relevant perspectives on a sustainable vision for Washington State's solid waste system. The networking efforts within the region will continue to encourage participation throughout the meeting series.

Each of the four regional meetings will build upon work done in the previous meeting. The diversity of perspectives on solid waste issues and sustainability identified in Meeting 1 will be considered in the next steps.

At the April meeting, participants will start by examining the issues identified in Meeting 1. The two goals of the April meetings are to identify indicators for sustainability for a long-term vision, beyond 60 years, and also to determine sustainability-related milestones that meet the current solid waste systems' needs.

In May, participants will identify strategies and alternatives they wish to see considered for the region to achieve the milestones identified in April.

June meeting participants will draw together the vision, milestones, and strategies into a regional recommendation to support movement toward a sustainable approach to solid waste.

All are welcome and encouraged to join their regional dialogues during the three remaining meetings. Your views on the vision will directly contribute to regional recommendations. Join us for this opportunity to contribute to the Washington State's economic vitality, ecological health, and social well being.



Ecology is an equal opportunity agency.
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THE NEXT STEP

At the April round table meeting East Region participants will be tasked to consider how best to identify the milestones and strategies that will address issues of regional importance that were identified by participants at the meeting.

Waste prevention
True costs
Waste diversion
Sustainability
Universe of solid waste
Education
Regulatory limits
Economic disincentives
Government participation in recycling,
Identification and alteration of tax policies that shift taxes to
resource depletion and polluting activities
Level playing field for resource conservation
Manufacturers' shared responsibility for their product and
packaging waste
Holistic resource management systems
Development of reuse and recycling infrastructures

ECOLOGY RESOURCE PEOPLE

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Solid Waste - Dan Koroma and Jim Wavada;
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